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Original Credits:
Writer:
Steve Parkhouse
Art:
Dave Gibbons
Editor:
Alan McKenzie

Stars Fell on Stockbridge
Original Credits:
Writer:
Steve Parkhouse
Art:
Dave Gibbons
Editor:
Alan McKenzie

New Credits:
Colors:
Charlie Kirchoff
Cover:
Charlie Kirchoff over Dave Gibbons
Editor:
Denton J. Tipton
Designer:
Amauri Osorio

cover checklist:

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Dave Gibbons

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Ben Templesmith, Artist/Designer
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Chris Mowry, Graphic Artist
Amauri Osorio, Graphic Artist
Gilberto Lazcano, Production Assistant

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THE TIDES OF TIME

PART SEVEN

IN THE UNIMAGINABLY DISTANT SYSTEM OF ALTHRACE, AT THE HEART OF A WHITE HOLE, AN **EXTRAORDINARY EXPERIMENT** IS TAKING PLACE... THE MANIPULATION OF **TIME ITSELF**...

HIGHER EVOLUTIONARIES THROUGHOUT THE KNOWN UNIVERSE HAVE LINKED THEIR MENTAL FACULTIES IN A VAST NETWORK... WITH THE PURPOSE OF SUSPENDING TIME AND DISCOVERING THE WHEREABOUTS OF THE **EVENT SYNTHESISER**, STOLEN BY THE DEMON **MELANICUS**!

MEANWHILE, THE DOCTOR WAS STANDING BY, AWAITING THE **VITAL CO-ORDINATES** OF THE SYNTHESISER'S EXACT LOCATION...

WE'LL BE SAFE INSIDE THE **TARDIS**, JUSTIN...

THE EFFECTS OF TIME-BENDING WON'T REACH US IN HERE!

HOWEVER... ON THE CHRONOMETER OF ABSOLUTE TIME, WE'LL SEE WHAT THE EFFECTS ARE ON THE **REST** OF TIME...

I THINK SOMETHING'S HAPPENING **ALREADY**!

999.9

THE CHRONOMETER HAS **STOPPED**! THE HIGHER EVOLUTIONARIES HAVE ATTAINED A POINT OF **PERFECT EQUILIBRIUM**!

THAT'S **EXQUISITE** MENTAL CONTROL!

THEY ARE NOW MEDITATING UPON THE ILLUSORY NATURE OF TIME... ACTUALLY GOING **BEYOND** THE CONCEPTS OF TIME AND SPACE AS WE KNOW THEM...

... FAR BEYOND THE GROSS MANIFESTATIONS OF THE EVENT SYNTHESISER... TO THE VERY THRESHOLD OF **OMNIPRESENCE**!

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DOCTOR ...**LOOK**!

THE CO-ORDINATES!

MUSIC FROM AN ORGAN!

COMING FROM THE CHURCH!

THIS IS EARTH, ISN'T IT, MY FRIEND? I CAN FEEL IT!

YES...IT'S EARTH...AT SOME SUSPENDED POINT IN TIME! AND YET SOME-ONE, OR SOMETHING IS STILL ABLE TO FUNCTION...

GOOD GRIEF! THERE IT IS...THE EVENT SYNTHESISER!

NEXT MOMENT...
SLAAAM!

A SOUND LIKE ROLLING THUNDER ISSUED FROM THE GIGANTIC INSTRUMENT...AS IF FROM THE DEPTHS OF THE PIT...

...AND ALL HELL BROKE LOOSE!

THE TEMPERATURE INSIDE THE CHURCH PLUNGED TO ZERO...THE VERY AIR SEEMED TO WRITHE WITH EVIL...
DOCTOR! YOUR HAT! GIVE ME YOUR HAT!
MY HAT?!

PRAY THAT THIS IS HOLY WATER, DOCTOR...AND NOT JUST RAIN COME IN THROUGH THE ROOF!

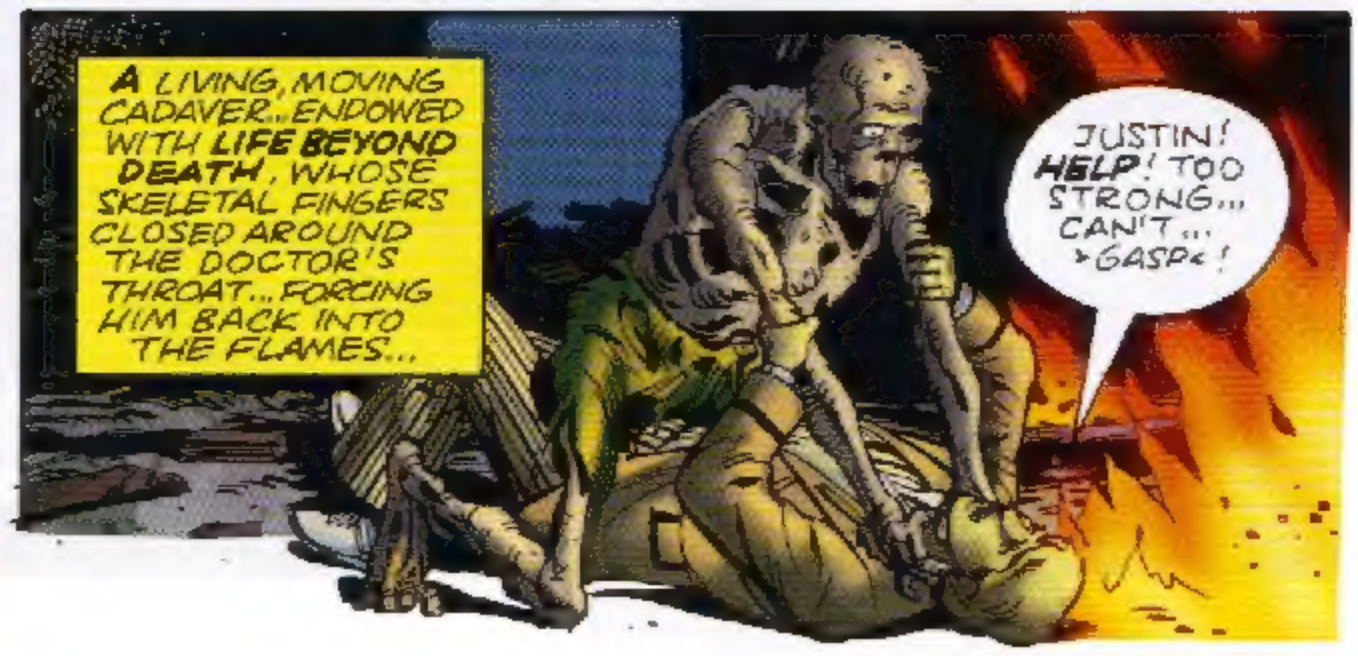
AAAAAGH!
METHINKS MELANICUS NOW SHOWS HIS TRUE FACE!

YOU CRAWLING MAGGOT ...YOU WORM! I WILL SCORCH YOUR SOUL...SEND YOU SCREAMING INTO ETERNITY WITH HELL-FIRE EATING YOUR BRAIN!

VROOARR!

JUSTIN! ARE YOU ALRIGHT? JUSTIN!

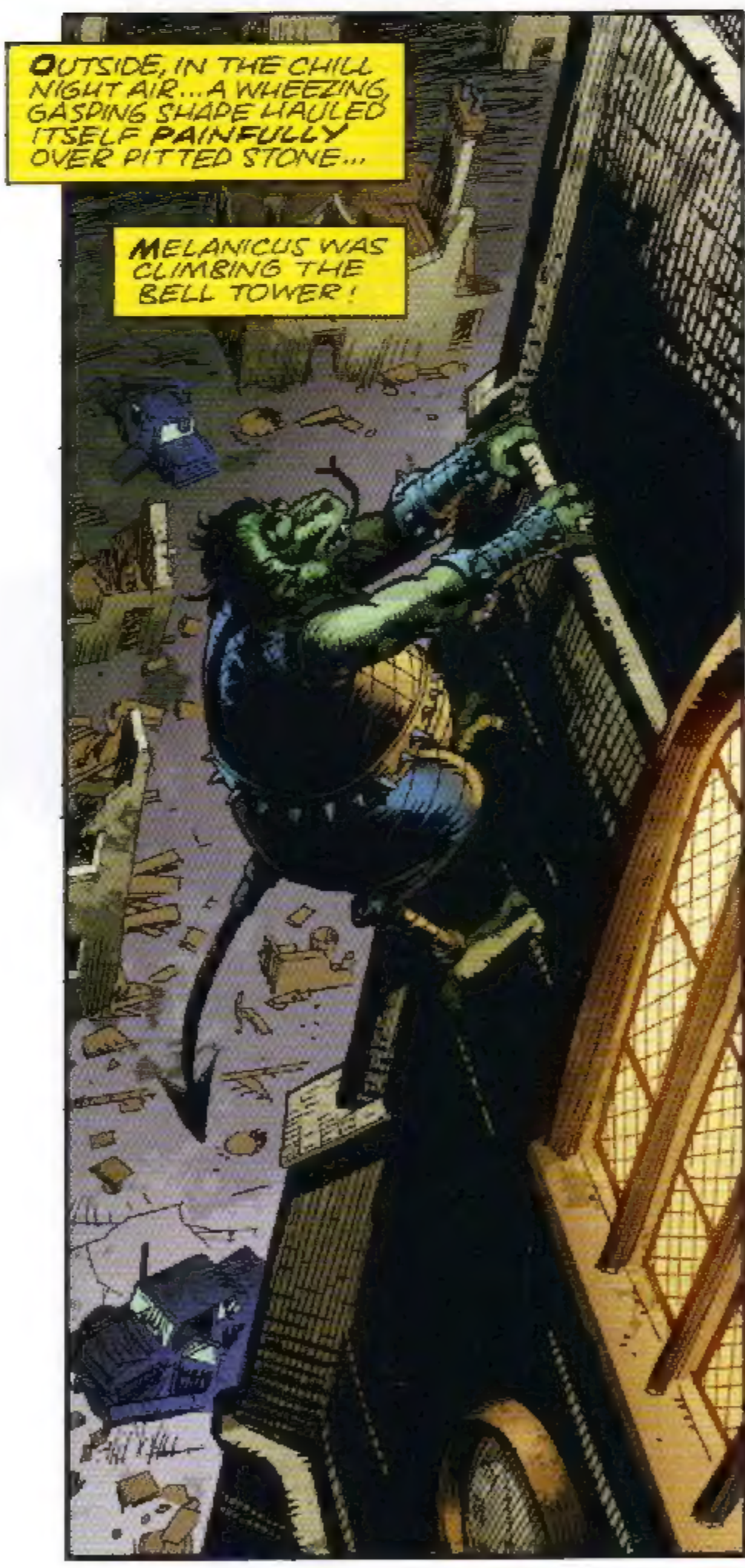
THE GROUND HEAVED ONCE MORE ... WITH A GASP OF FOETID AIR, A TOMB SPEWED FORTH ITS GRISLY OCCUPANT!
OH, MY GOOD-NESS!


A LIVING, MOVING CADAVER.. ENDOWED WITH LIFE BEYOND DEATH, WHOSE SKELETAL FINGERS CLOSED AROUND THE DOCTOR'S THROAT... FORCING HIM BACK INTO THE FLAMES...
JUSTIN! HELP! TOO STRONG... CAN'T... >GASP<!

KRAK
I'M HERE, MY FRIEND!
AAGH! I'M BURNING!

HERE! YOUR WET HAT WILL SMOTHER THE FLAMES!
SSSSSSS
AHHH ... THANK GOODNESS!

JUSTIN ... I CAN'T SEE VERY WELL WITH THIS HAT OVER MY EYES... BUT I'D SWEAR WE WERE ALONE!
YOU'RE RIGHT, MY FRIEND... MELANICUS HAS GONE!


OUTSIDE, IN THE CHILL NIGHT AIR... A WHEEZING, GASPING SHAPE HAULED ITSELF PAINFULLY OVER PITTED STONE...
MELANICUS WAS CLIMBING THE BELL TOWER!

BUT AS HE REACHED THE TOP ... HE FOUND HIMSELF CONFRONTED BY A SHADOW...
A SHADOW WHICH SEEMED TO BLOT OUT THE NIGHT STARS ... A SHADOW WITH AN ORB FOR A HEAD ... AND A GUN WHICH GLITTERED WITH ITS OWN MENACING LIGHT!
TWO SHOTS WERE FIRED... TWO SHOTS FOUND THEIR MARK!
THE MIND OF MELANICUS WAS PLUNGED ONCE MORE INTO DARKNESS AND PAIN!
AAARGH!

ONLY THE DEMON'S INHUMAN STRENGTH PREVENTED HIM FROM FALLING... INSTEAD HE HUNG SUSPENDED BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH...
BETWEEN FREEDOM AND THE DARK EARTH BENEATH...
THERE! THERE AT THE WINDOW ...HE SEEKS TO ESCAPE BY CLIMBING THE TOWER...
IT CANNOT BE...
...THE BEAST MUST DIE!
KRAAS H!
IN THAT DECISIVE MOMENT, THE KNIGHT'S BLADE PIERCED THE DEMON'S HEART ...DRIVEN BY THE STRENGTH OF CONVICTION ... AND RIGHTEOUS FURY!

THEN BOTH DEMON AND KNIGHT WERE **CONSUMED** IN A BLINDING FLASH...

A RELEASE OF ENERGY THAT **SEARED** THE DOCTOR'S EYES... AND SENT HIM REELING...

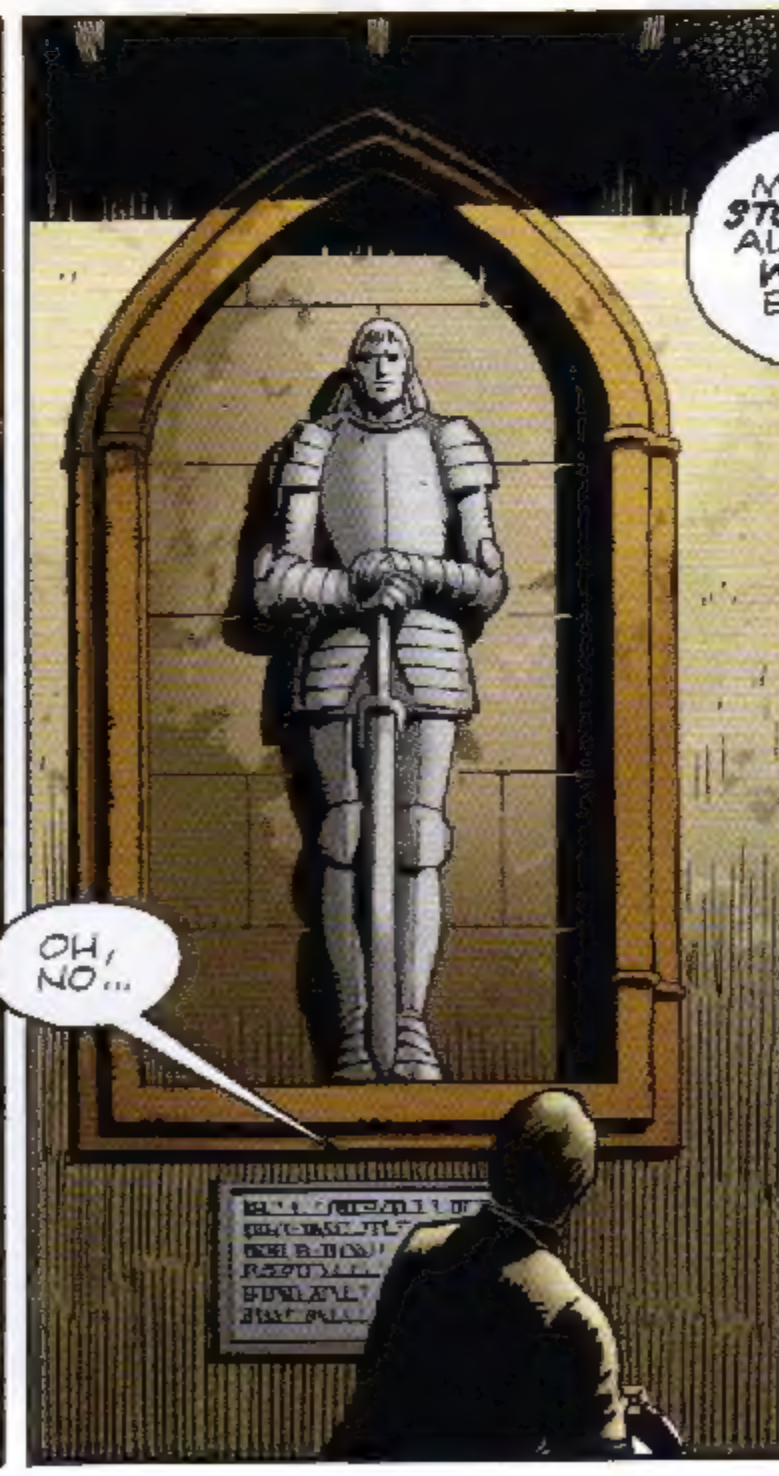
AND IT SEEMED THE UNIVERSE **MOVED**...

AS THE DOCTOR FELL INTO THE SEETHING CURRENT OF TIME... HIS EYES AND EARS WERE FILLED WITH THE LASTING SIGHTS AND SOUNDS OF THE **EVENT SYNTHESISER**...

PLAYED BY ITS GUARDIAN OF OLD, THE **PRIME MOVER**!

EONS LATER, AFTER WHAT SEEMED LIKE AN **ENDLESS DREAM**, THE DOCTOR AWOKE ON A COLD, STONE FLOOR, WITH A SINGLE **NAME** ON HIS LIPS...

JUSTIN? **JUSTIN**!



"THE JOURNEY HAS NOT ENDED HERE, FOR HIS SPIRIT CLAIMED, BY DEATH-KNELL'S CHIME, LIES WAITING STILL, TO CROSS ONCE MORE A SEA OF STARS, AND SAIL THE TIDES OF TIME."

AN EPITAPH FOR JUSTIN? IT COULD JUST AS EASILY BE *MINE*...

BUT *WHO*? WHO COULD HAVE MADE THIS TRIBUTE ...WHO COULD *POSSIBLY* HAVE KNOWN?

IT'S TIME TO *LEAVE* NOW, DOCTOR...

...WHAT?

THE SKIPPER ASKED ME TO FETCH YOU... YOU'RE NEXT MAN IN!

WHAT WERE YOU DOING IN HERE? PRAYING FOR A GOOD INNINGS?

ARE YOU *ALRIGHT*, DOC? YOU SURE YOU WANT TO PLAY?

OH... YES...YES, OF COURSE! AFTER ALL, THE GAME MUST GO ON...

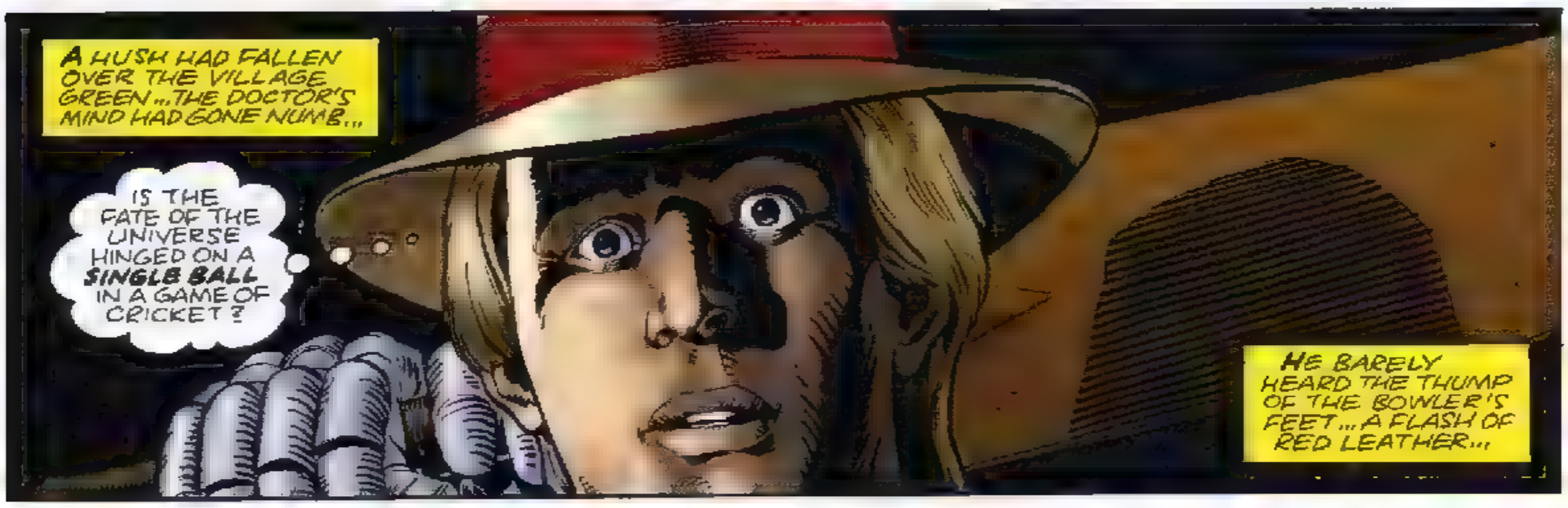
MUSTN'T IT?

YOU'RE IN, DOCTOR... DON'T FORGET, KEEP A STRAIGHT BAT!

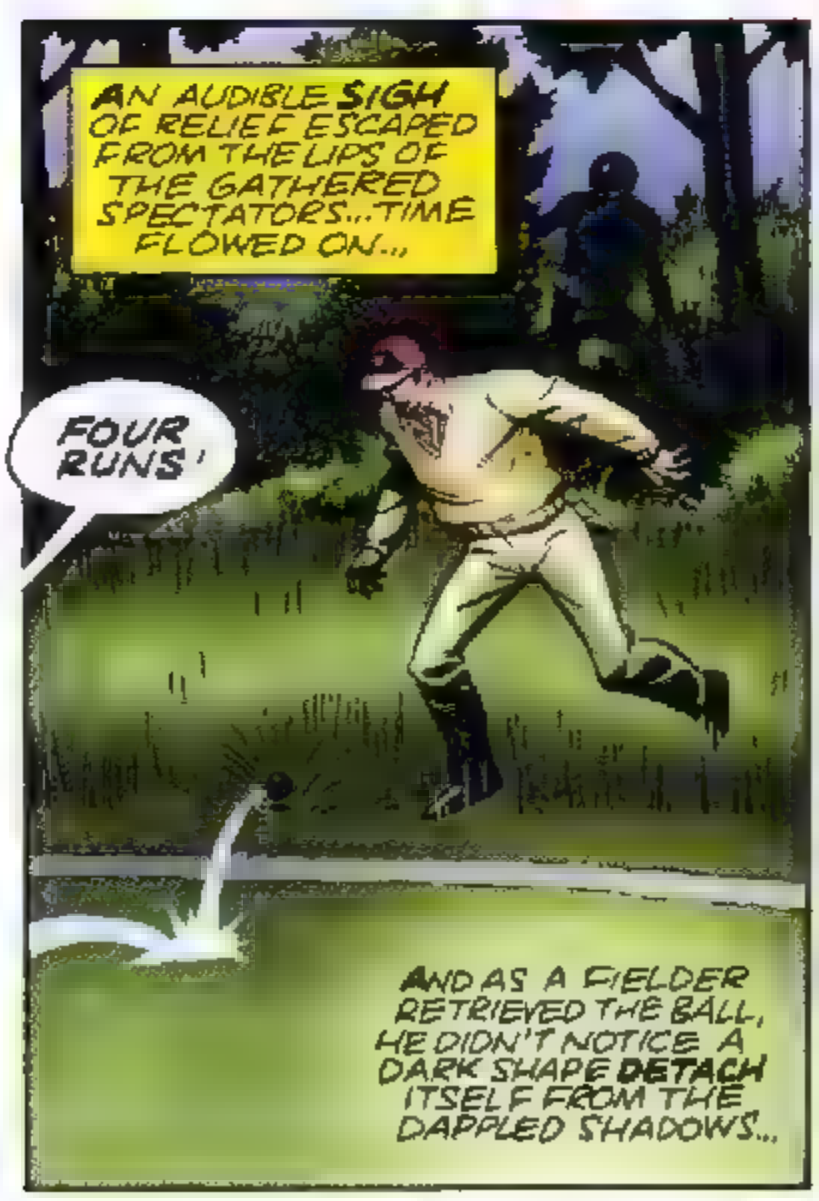
'OWZAT?

MIDDLE PLEASE, GEORGE
THAT'S MIDDLE DOCTOR!
EVERY-THING IS THE SAME... AND YET EVERYTHING IS DIFFERENT...

HAS TIME REALLY GONE BACK? AM I RELIVING A DREAM? IS MELANICUS REALLY DEAD?
DID THE HIGHER EVOLUTIONARIES SUCCEED? DID THEY EVER EXIST?


A HUSH HAD FALLEN OVER THE VILLAGE GREEN... THE DOCTOR'S MIND HAD GONE NUMB...
IS THE FATE OF THE UNIVERSE HINGED ON A SINGLE BALL IN A GAME OF CRICKET?
HE BARELY HEARD THE THUMP OF THE BOWLER'S FEET... A FLASH OF RED LEATHER...

CRAK!


AN AUDIBLE SIGH OF RELIEF ESCAPED FROM THE LIPS OF THE GATHERED SPECTATORS... TIME FLOWED ON...
FOUR RUNS!
AND AS A FIELDER RETRIEVED THE BALL, HE DIDN'T NOTICE A DARK SHAPE DETACH ITSELF FROM THE DAPPLED SHADOWS...

A SHAPE LIKE THAT OF A MAN... BUT NOT WHOLLY HUMAN...
MAY I RETURN HOME NOW, MASTERS? HAVE I PLEASED YOU?
YES, SHAYDE... YOU HAVE DONE EVERYTHING THAT WAS EXPECTED, AND MORE... WE ARE PLEASED
RETURN NOW TO GALLIFREY... YOUR PRESENT ASSIGNMENT IS OVER...

THEN ONLY THE SOUND OF LEATHER ON WILLOW WAS HEARD ON THE SOFT SUMMER BREEZE...
...AND A RIPPLE OF LOW LAUGHTER IN THE AFTERNOON SUN...

THE END.

STARS FELL ON STOCKBRIDGE

PART ONE

THE SMALL VILLAGE OF STOCKBRIDGE, SOMEWHERE IN THE DEPTHS OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE, HAD RECENTLY BEEN WITNESS TO EVENTS OF A CATACLYSMIC NATURE...

BUT THANKS TO THE TIMELY INTERVENTION OF THE DOCTOR AND THE MATRIX LORDS OF GALLIFREY, LIFE HAD RETURNED TO NORMAL...

WELL... RELATIVELY NORMAL...

FOR WHEN MAXWELL EDISON WAS ABROAD, ALMOST ANY-THING COULD HAPPEN... AND FREQUENTLY DID!

I'VE GOT SOME-THING! I'VE REALLY GOT SOME-THING!

MAXWELL EDISON... KNOWN AFFECTIONATELY TO THE VILLAGERS AS 'MAD MAX', WAS A MAN OF MANY TALENTS...

ASTROLOGER, MEDIUM, WATER DIVINER, SOOTHSAYER, FULLTIME VEGETARIAN AND PART-TIME U.F.O. SPOTTER...

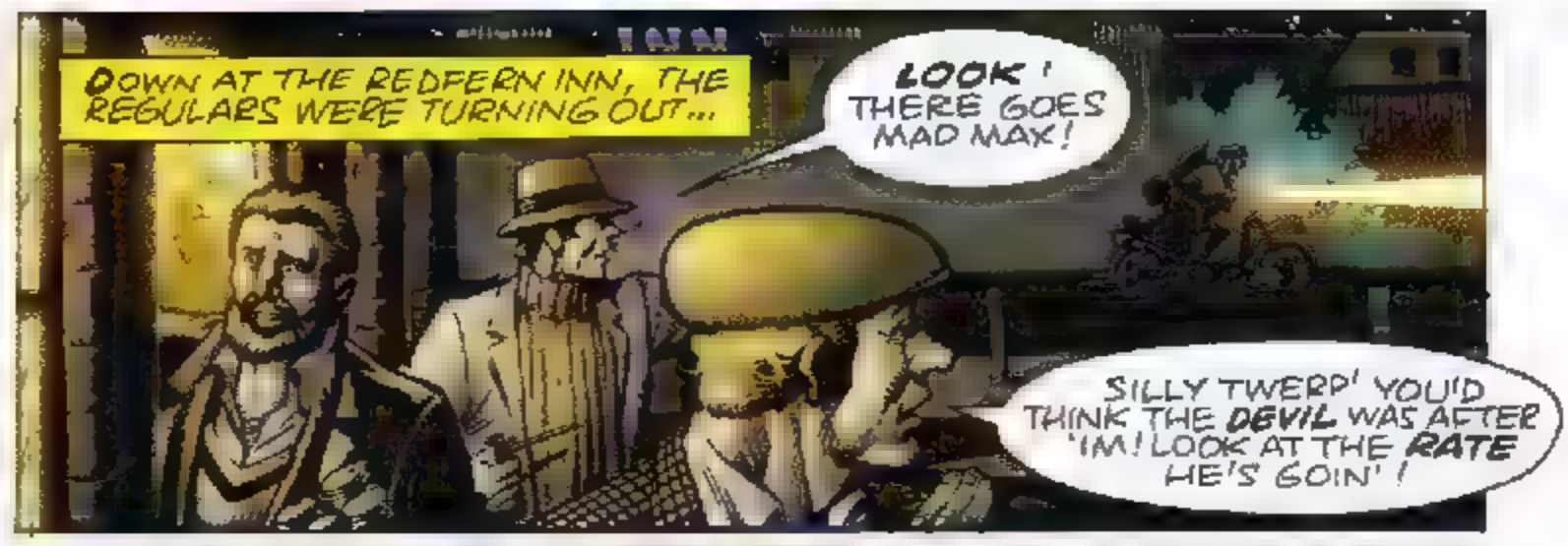
MAX BELIEVED, QUITE RIGHTLY, THAT HE HELD A KEY POSITION IN THE COSMIC SCHEME OF THINGS. AND SOME DAY THE COSMOS WOULD SEND HIM THE SIGN HE'D BEEN WAITING FOR...

COULD THIS BE IT? IT'S A POSITIVE READING ALRIGHT... SOMETHING IN EARTH ORBIT... ABOUT A HUNDRED MILES UP AND FALLING FAST!

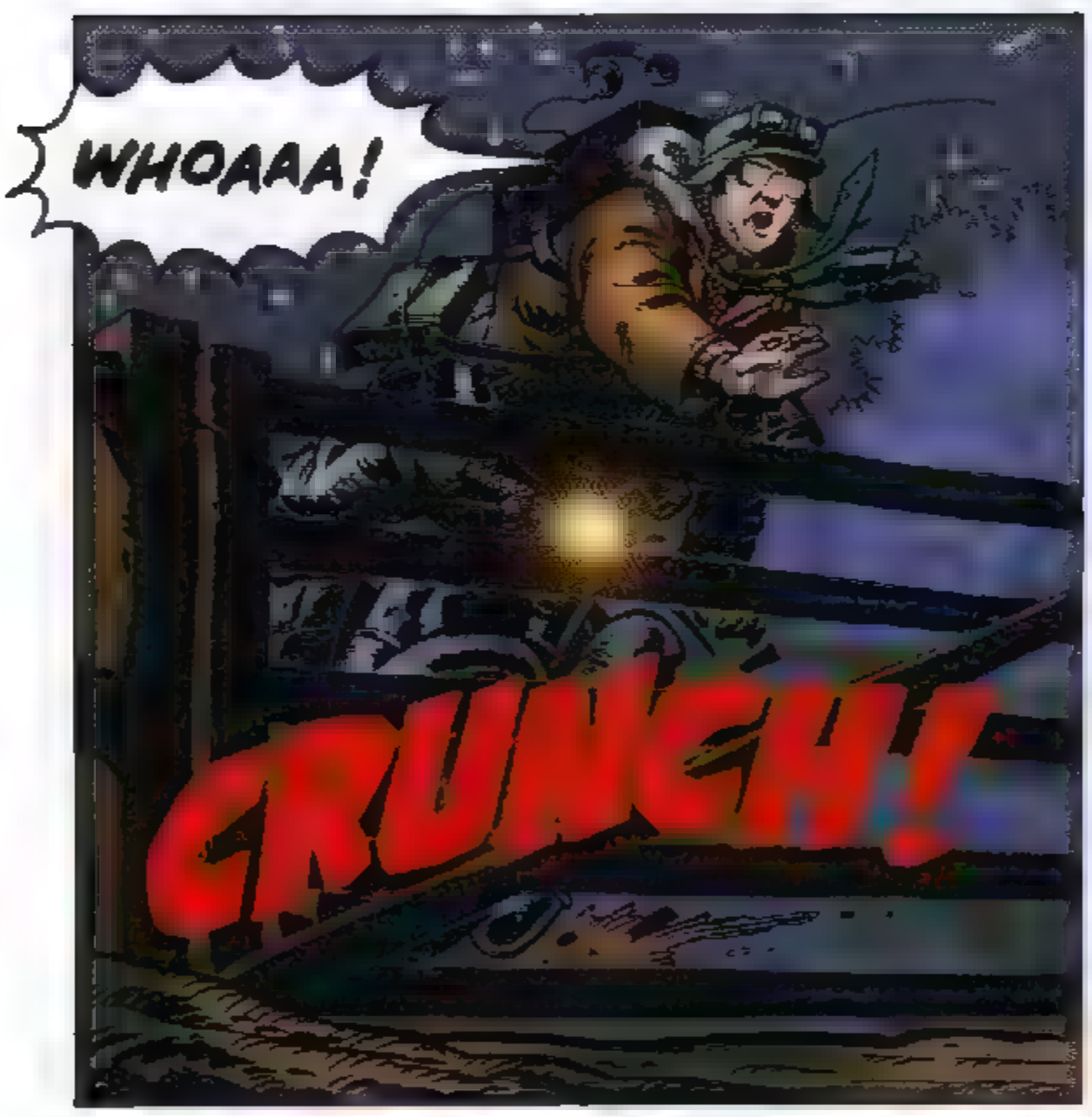
THERE! IT'S INCREDIBLE! IT LOOKS AS IF IT'S LANDING IN WELL'S WOOD!

Script: Steve Parkhouse Art: Dave Gibbons Editor: Alan McKenzie

PAUSING ONLY TO DON A CRASH HELMET, MAX MADE SPEED...
I MUST GET OVER THERE AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE! THIS COULD BE THE CHANCE OF A LIFETIME!


DOWN AT THE REDFERN INN, THE REGULARS WERE TURNING OUT...
LOOK! THERE GOES MAD MAX!
SILLY TWERP! YOU'D THINK THE DEVIL WAS AFTER 'IM! LOOK AT THE RATE HE'S GOIN'!

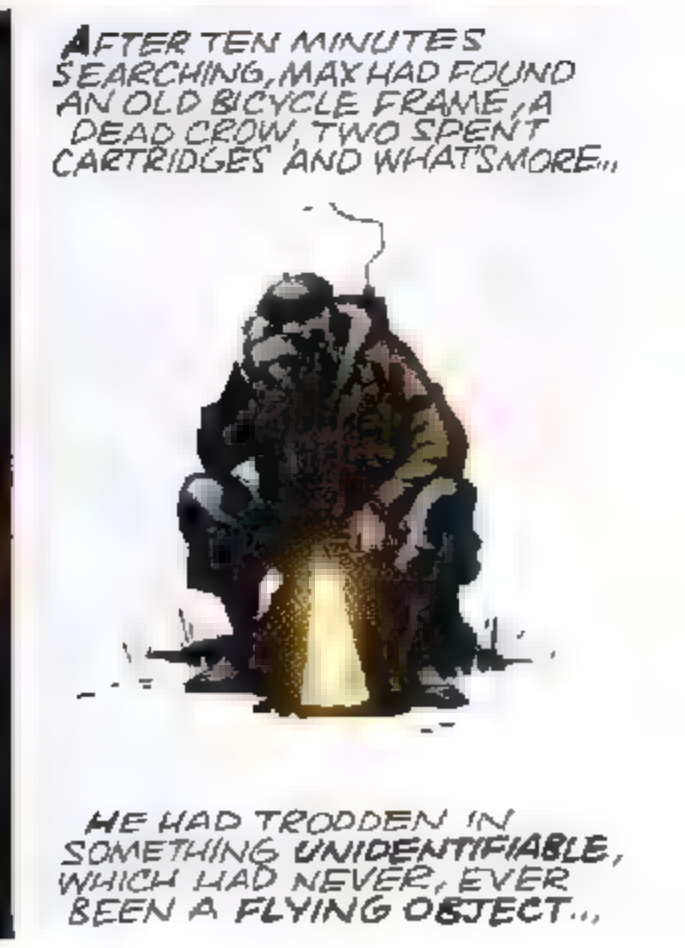
BUT MAX HAD OTHER THINGS ON HIS MIND ...FOR AS HE TURNED OFF THE ROAD TO WELL'S WOOD...
OH, NO! SOMEBODY'S CLOSED THE GATE!


WHOAAA!
CRUNCH!

GRR

I HOPE MY TORCH BATTERIES DIDN'T GET WET!

THANK GOODNESS FOR THAT! NOW LET'S SEE WHAT WE CAN FIND!


AFTER TEN MINUTES SEARCHING, MAX HAD FOUND AN OLD BICYCLE FRAME, A DEAD CROW, TWO SPENT CARTRIDGES AND WHAT'S MORE...
HE HAD TRODDEN IN SOMETHING UNIDENTIFIABLE, WHICH HAD NEVER, EVER BEEN A FLYING OBJECT...

THIS CALLS FOR DRASTIC MEASURES ... THE DIVINING ROD!
IF THERE'S AN OBJECT OF POWER IN THESE WOODS, I'LL SURELY FIND IT WITH THIS!
BY GEORGE! I'M ONTO SOMETHING ALREADY!
CRIMINEY! I'M ALMOST ON TOP OF IT! IT MUST BE WITHIN A FEW FEET!
MAX TOOK A STEP FORWARD INTO THE DARKNESS...
OW!
CLONK!
THIS IS IT! THIS IS IT!
WELL, I'M BLOWED... IT'S QUITE SMALL REALLY... NOT LIKE AN INTERSTELLAR SPACE CRAFT AT ALL!
THEN SOMETHING CAUGHT MAX'S EYE IN THE TORCH-LIGHT... AND A CRUSHING DISAPPOINTMENT OVER-WHELMED HIM...
POLICE
A POLICE BOX! A ROTTEN OLD POLICE BOX?
OHH.. IT'S A SWIZZ.. A DIRTY ROTTEN SWIZZ!
OF ALL THE ROTTEN TRICKS TO PLAY ON A CHAP...
I'VE A GOOD MIND TO GO BACK TO TRAIN SPOTTING!
BUT THEN...
YAAAGH!

OH, MY GOODNESS!
OHH... THIS IS WONDERFUL! WONDER-FUL!
ALL MY LIFE I'VE DREAMED OF THIS... AND IT'S HAPPENED AT LAST!
A REAL INTERSTELLAR VENUSIAN SPACE-CRAFT! ALL THE WAY FROM VENUS, JUST TO COMMUNICATE WITH ME!
WITH ME!
I WOULDN'T TOUCH THAT IF I WERE YOU!
AAAGH!
WELCOME, MY FRIEND. WELCOME TO EARTH! I AM EARTH AMBASSADOR EDSON... AND I TAKE GREAT PLEASURE IN...
WHAT ARE YOU DOING HERE?

I...I TRACKED YOUR CRAFT TO EARTH WITH MY BIO-KINETIC ENERGISING RAY...
MAY I LOOK AT THAT MORE CLOSELY?

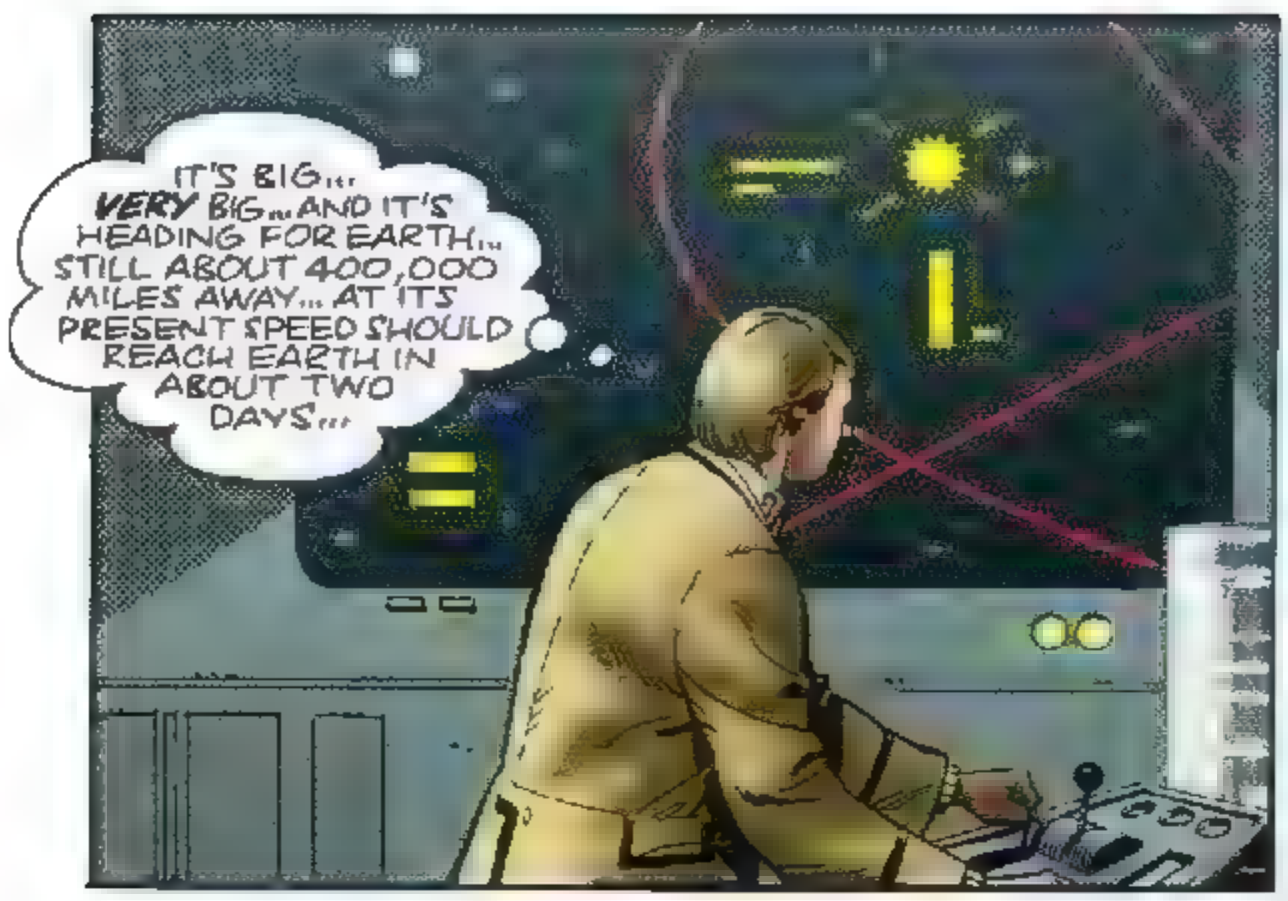
IT'S QUITE A SOPHISTICATED DEVICE, THOUGH NOT NEARLY AS COMPLEX AS YOUR VENUSIAN TECHNOLOGY...
IT'S JUST AN EMPTY BOX... WITH A FEW LOOSE WIRES!

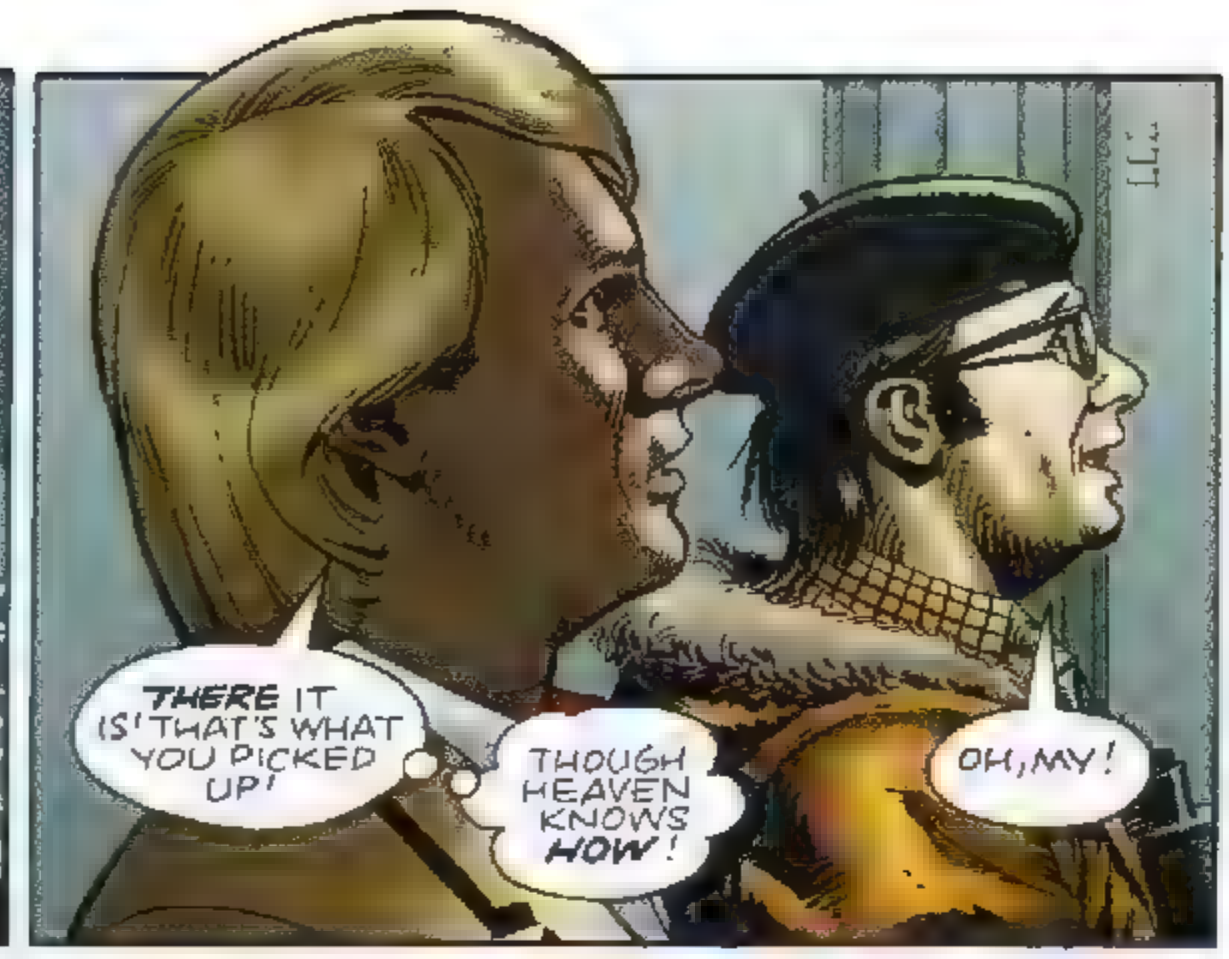
WELL... ACTUALLY... ER... IT'S JUST A FOCUSSING DEVICE FOR TELEPATHIC ENERGY... YOU SEE, I DON'T REALLY KNOW MUCH ABOUT ELECTRONICS AT ALL... UM...
HE SOUNDS HARMLESS ENOUGH... BUT ONE CAN NEVER BE TOO SURE...

WHERE DID YOU SAY YOU PICKED UP A READING?
IN THE SOUTHERN SKY ... SECTOR 315 ... VECTOR ELEVEN ... QUADRANT 616!

THAT'S MEANINGLESS... HE MUST BE USING A SYSTEM OF HIS OWN. I'D BETTER GIVE IT A QUICK SCAN...
I'D ...ER... I'D BE HAPPY TO ASSIST YOU WITH ANY EXPERIMENTS...

IF YOU WANT TO TAKE ANY BLOOD SAMPLES OR ANYTHING... I DON'T MIND!
GOOD HEAVENS! I'M ACTUALLY PICKING UP SOMETHING!
WHEN WILL YOU MAKE YOUR PRESENCE KNOWN TO WORLD GOVERNMENTS? MAY I TAKE A PHOTOGRAPH FOR THE U.F.O. SPOTTERS BI-MONTHLY NEWS LETTER?
IT'S TOO BIG FOR A SATELLITE AND TOO FAR AWAY FOR A SPACE LAB... BESIDES, THERE AREN'T ANY IN ORBIT AT THE MOMENT...


IT'S BIG... VERY BIG... AND IT'S HEADING FOR EARTH... STILL ABOUT 400,000 MILES AWAY... AT ITS PRESENT SPEED SHOULD REACH EARTH IN ABOUT TWO DAYS...


THERE IT IS! THAT'S WHAT YOU PICKED UP!
THOUGH HEAVEN KNOWS HOW!
OH, MY!

AHA! I UNDERSTAND NOW! THAT'S YOUR MOTHER-SHIP FROM VENUS, ISN'T IT?

I'M NOT FROM VENUS ...I'M FROM GALLIFREY!
AND I HAVEN'T GOT A MOTHER-SHIP!
GALLIFREY? I DON'T THINK THAT'S LISTED IN THE A-Z OF INHABITED PLANETS!

WELL, YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO MAKE AN AMENDMENT, WON'T YOU?

IF YOU EVER GET THE CHANCE!

IN THE COLD GULFS OF SPACE, NEARLY HALF A MILLION MILES FROM EARTH, A ONCE PROUD STARSHIP SWUNG ON ITS LEISURELY ORBIT AROUND THE SUN...

ENGINES LONG-DEAD, IT WAS HELD IN THE SILENT GRIP OF GRAVITATIONAL FORCES...

SCARRED BY METEORS, SEEMINGLY ABANDONED... ITS ORIGIN AND PURPOSE UNKNOWN...

AND INSIDE, DECKS AND CABINS WHICH ONCE BUSTLED WITH LIFE, NOW ECHOED ONLY GHOSTLY WHISPERS...

OR REVERBERATED EERILY AS AN OCCASIONAL METEOR STRUCK THE OUTER HULL...

BUT NOW, THE HALF-GLOOM WAS DISPERSED BY A FLASHING BLUE LIGHT..

AND THE SHRIEK OF DISPLACED MATTER AS THE **TARDIS** BEGAN TO TAKE SHAPE

THEN, FULLY MATERIALISED, THE TARDIS SEEMED TO SINK INTO THE SILENT SHADOWS.. ENVELOPED IN AN ATMOSPHERE OF BROODING MENACE...

BUT IF **THIS** WAS THE CRAFT I WAS TRACKING HOW DID I FIND YOU?

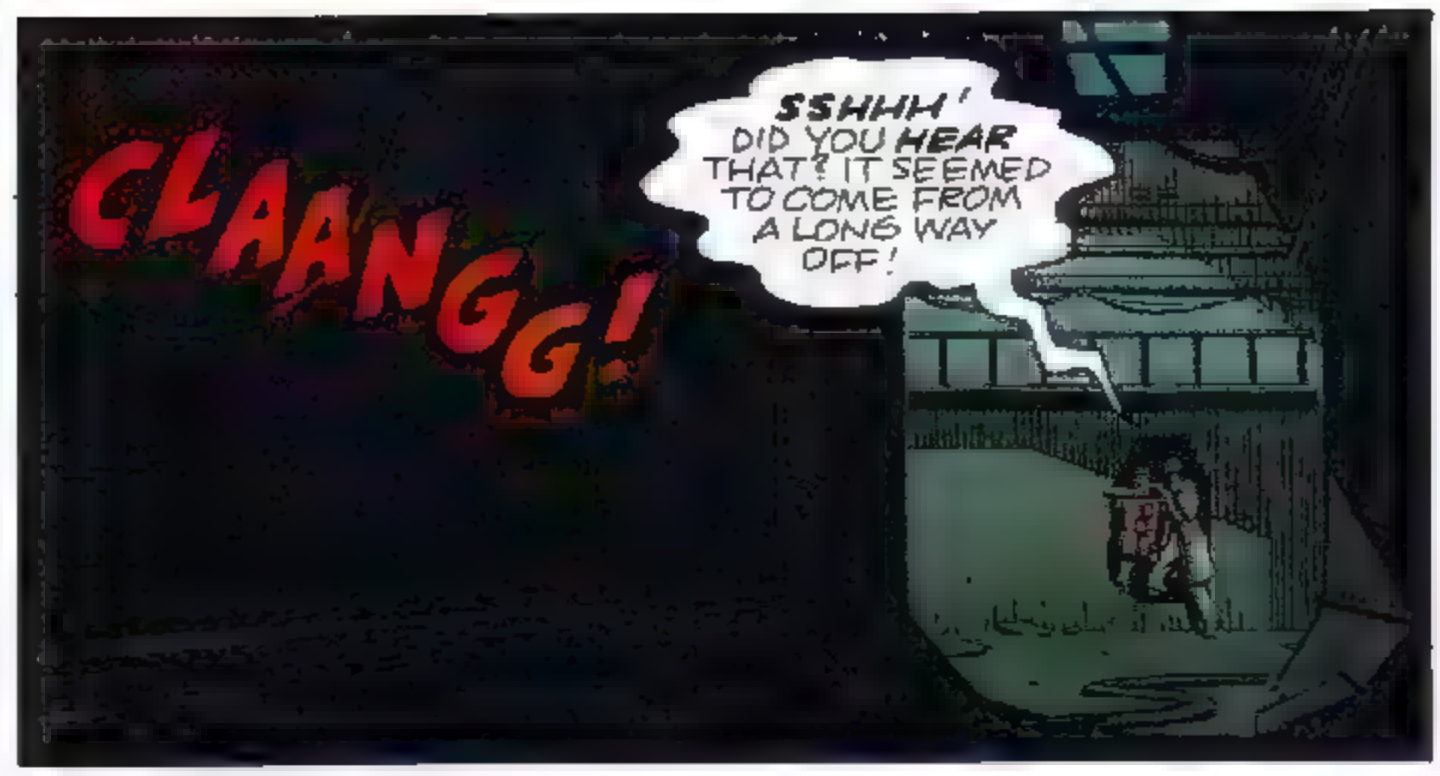
AND **WHO** ARE YOU, ANYWAY?

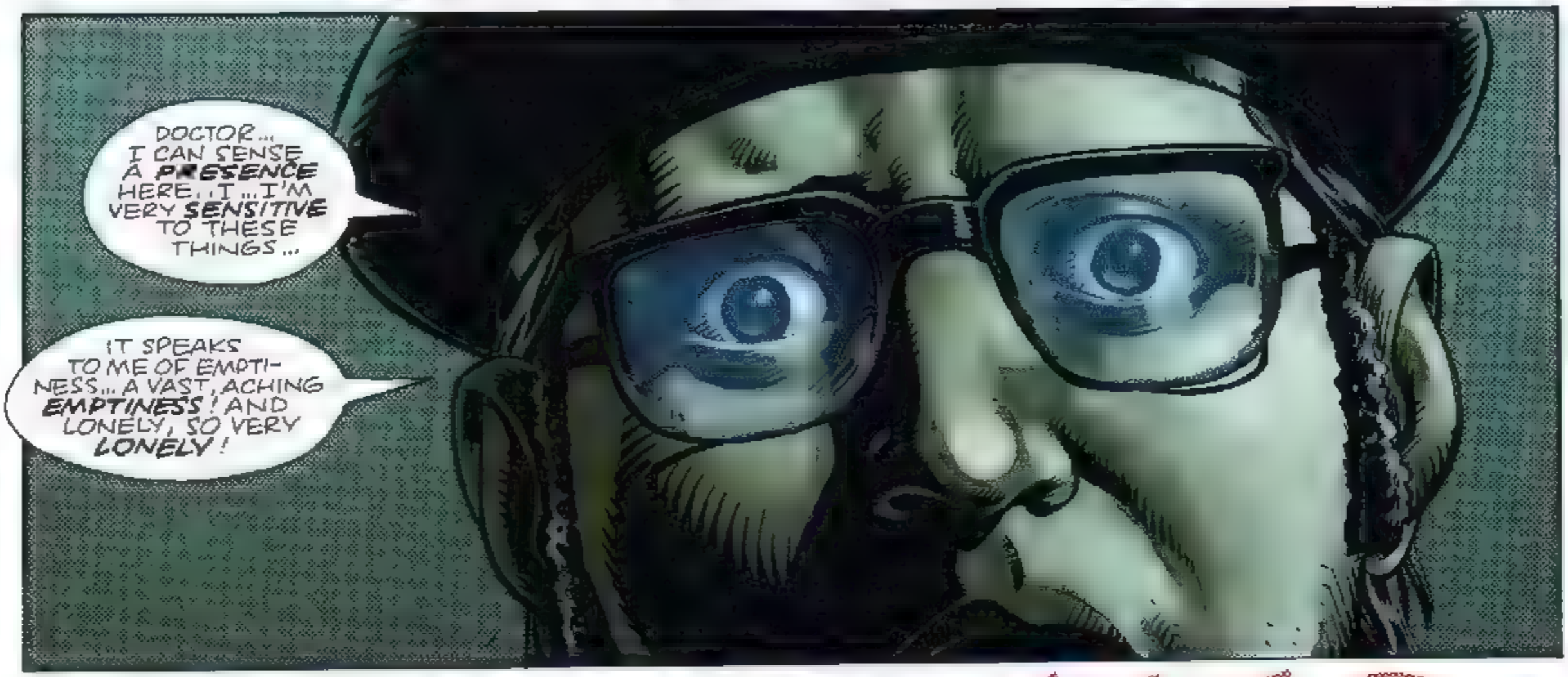
PURE COINCID-ENCE

OR WAS IT? PEOPLE WHO ARE LOOKING FOR SOMETHING HAVE A TENDENCY TO **FIND** IT...

WHETHER THEY **WANT** TO OR NOT!

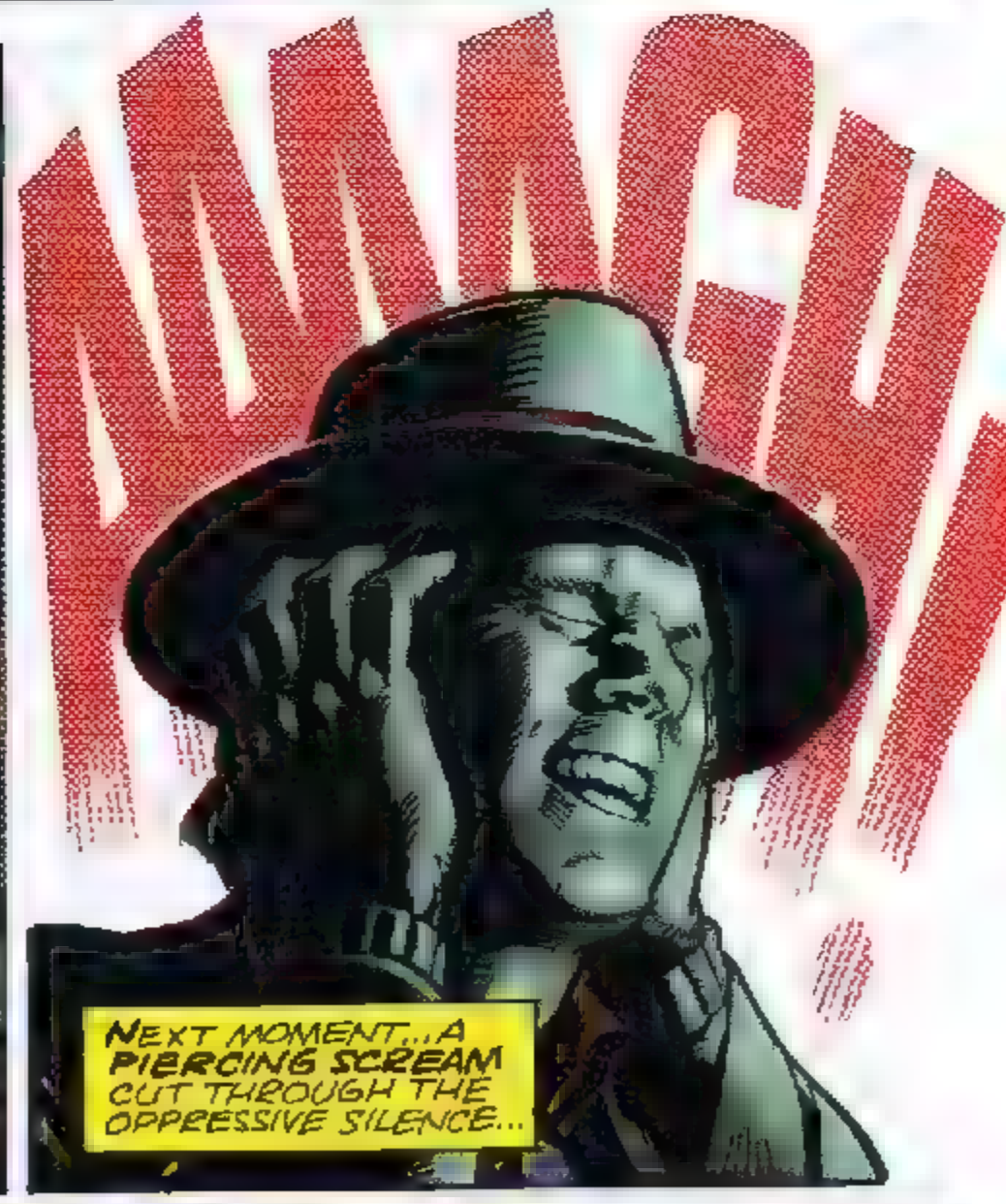
AND AS FOR YOUR SECOND QUESTION... YOU MAY CALL ME THE DOCTOR...


CLAANGG!
SSHHH! DID YOU HEAR THAT? IT SEEMED TO COME FROM A LONG WAY OFF!


DOCTOR... I CAN SENSE A PRESENCE HERE... I... I'M VERY SENSITIVE TO THESE THINGS...
IT SPEAKS TO ME OF EMPTINESS... A VAST, ACHING EMPTINESS! AND LONELY, SO VERY LONELY!

OH, DOCTOR. I THOUGHT I WAS LONELY... BUT THIS... THIS IS ABJECT DESPAIR! TOTAL ANGUISH... I CAN HARDLY BEAR IT!
STEADY ON, OLD CHAP... TRY AND KEEP IT OUTSIDE YOURSELF! DON'T YIELD TOO MUCH...

BUT... IT'S COMING THIS WAY! GETTING CLOSER AND CLOSER... CAN'T YOU FEEL IT?
GOOD GRIEF, HE'S RIGHT... THE HAIRS ON THE BACK OF MY NECK ARE STANDING ON END!


MMMCH!
NEXT MOMENT... A PIERCING SCREAM CUT THROUGH THE OPPRESSIVE SILENCE...

AND WHEN THE DOCTOR LOOKED DOWN AT MAX...
HE HAD FAINTED DEAD AWAY!
NEXT:

STARS FELL ON STOCKBRIDGE

PART TWO

MAXWELL EDISON, ASTROLOGER, SEER AND UFO SPOTTER, HAS ADOPTED THE DOCTOR, BELIEVING HIM TO BE A VISITOR FROM VENUS...

WITH MAXWELL'S UNWITTING ASSISTANCE, THE DOCTOR TRACKED DOWN AN **ALIEN STARSHIP** DEEP IN SPACE ...UPON BOARDING THE CRAFT, THEY DISCOVERED IT TO BE DESERTED, SAVE FOR A POWERFUL AND TERRIFYING **PRESENCE**...

THE POOR MAN HAS FAINTED CLEAN AWAY! SOME GOOD OLD-FASHIONED **SMELLING SALTS** WILL REVIVE HIM...

SURE ENOUGH...

DON'T LET IT **GET** ME, DOCTOR! **DON'T LET IT GET ME!**

STEADY... CALM DOWN, MAX! THERE'S NOTHING HERE TO BE AFRAID OF!

IF THERE'S... NOTHING TO BE... **AFRAID** OF, WHY DO I... FEEL SO ...**PETRIFIED**, DOCTOR?

I CAN ...**FEEL** IT AGAIN... **CLOSING IN ON ME**! OH, DEAR GOD!

I'VE GOT TO GET **OUT** OF HERE! I'VE GOT TO **GET AWAY!**

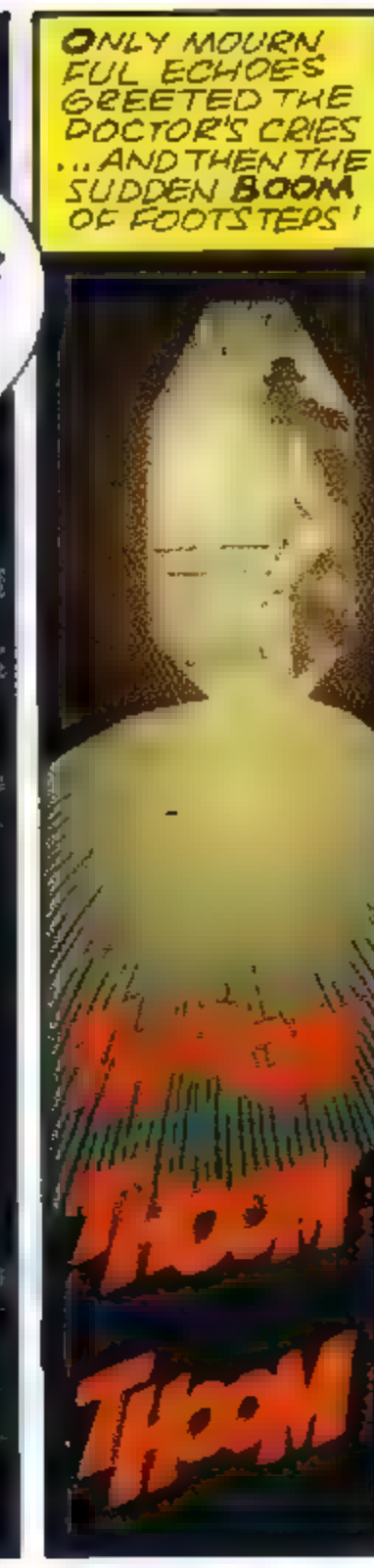
MAX! **COME BACK!**

THE LAST THING I WANT TO DO IS **LOSE** HIM! THIS CRAFT IS PROBABLY A **MAZE** OF COMPARTMENTS AND GALLERIES!

DON'T BE **SILLY**, MAX! RUNNING AWAY WON'T SOLVE **ANYTHING!**

AT LEAST HE'S LEFT HIS TORCH BEHIND... AND I CAN HEAR SOMETHING UP AHEAD!

MAX! IS THAT YOU?
WHERE ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU? WHERE ARE YOU?
MAX! MAX! MAX! MAX! MAX! MAX!

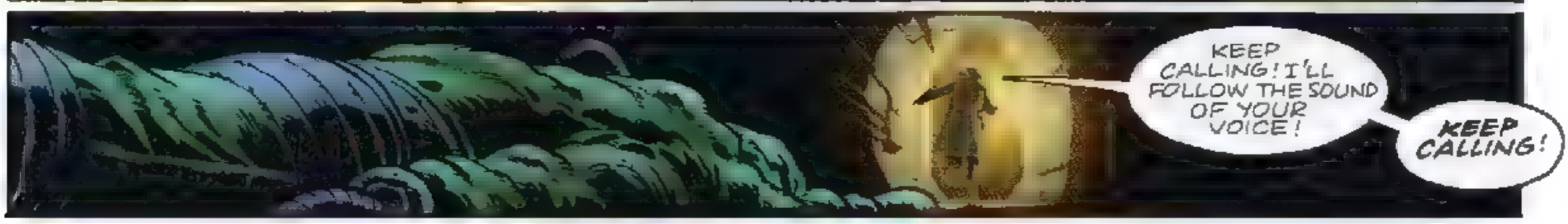

ONLY MOURNFUL ECHOES GREETED THE DOCTOR'S CRIES ...AND THEN THE SUDDEN BOOM OF FOOTSTEPS!
THOOM
THOOM

MAX! MAX!

GAAH!

IT'S AN EMPTY SPACE-SUIT OF SOME KIND!
BUT WHAT KIND OF CREATURE WAS IT INTENDED FOR?

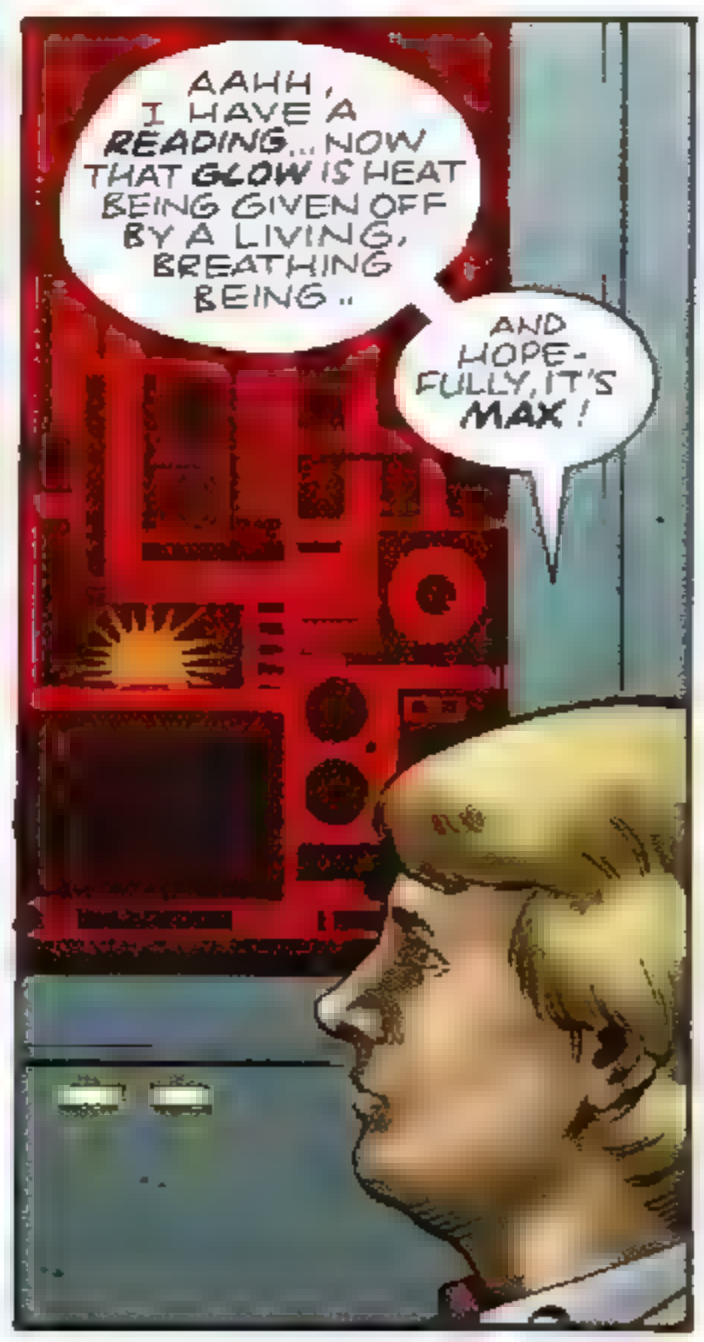
THEN A THIN, WAVERING VOICE CALLED OUT... AS IF FROM A GREAT DISTANCE...
DOCTOR! HELP! HELP ME, DOCTOR!

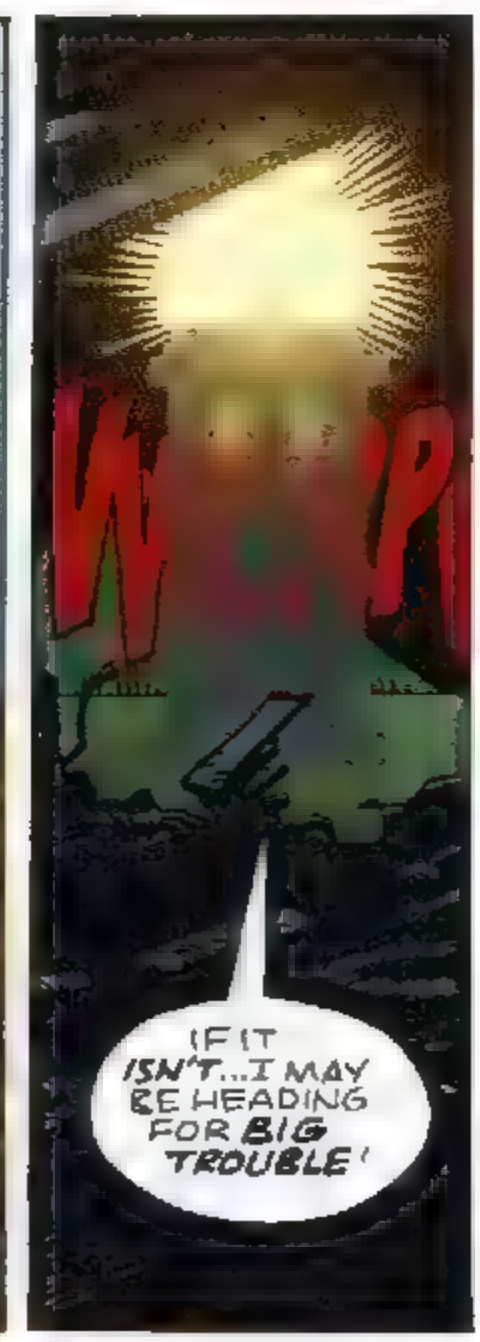

KEEP CALLING! I'LL FOLLOW THE SOUND OF YOUR VOICE!
KEEP CALLING!

FOR LONG MINUTES, THE DOCTOR POUNDED DOWN DESERTED CORRIDORS FEELINGS OF UNEASINESS GROWING AT EVERY STEP, AND THE VOICE KEPT CALLING, ALWAYS JUST OUT OF RANGE...
.. UNTIL...
I'M BACK AT THE TARDIS ...I MUST HAVE WALKED IN A BIG CIRCLE!

I CAN'T KEEP GROPING AROUND IN THE DARK... IT'S TIME TO APPLY A LITTLE REASON!

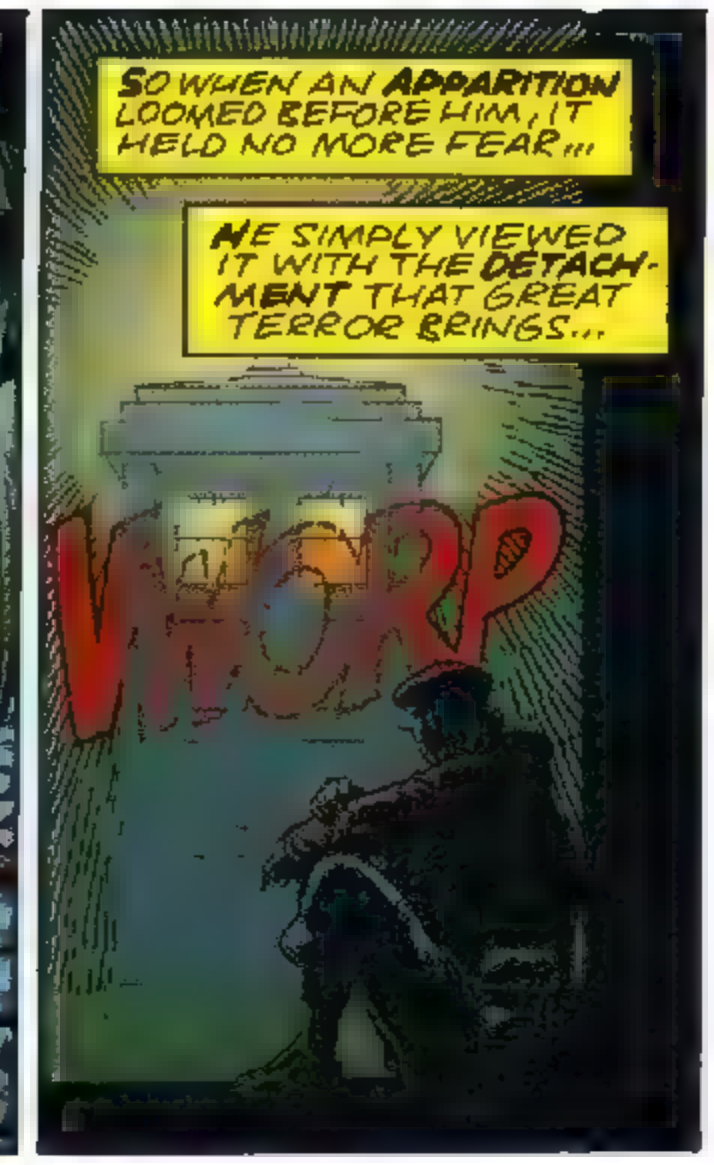
I'LL DO AN INFRA-RED SCAN OF THE ENTIRE SHIP... I'LL WORK THROUGH THE WHOLE SPECTRUM IF NECESSARY...


AAHH, I HAVE A READING... NOW THAT GLOW IS HEAT BEING GIVEN OFF BY A LIVING, BREATHING BEING..
AND HOPE-FULLY, IT'S MAX!


IF IT ISN'T... I MAY BE HEADING FOR BIG TROUBLE!

IN A DISTANT PART OF THE STARSHIP... MAX COWERED, EXHAUSTED ... HE HAD RUN IN BLIND PANIC, BUT THE FEAR HAD STAYED WITH HIM...
GROWING WITHIN HIM LIKE A HUGE BLACK SHADOW... TAKING SHAPE AND IDENTITY AS IF POSSESSING LIFE OF ITS OWN...
...MAX WAS ON THE BRINK...

HE HAD REACHED THE POINT WHERE A MORE RATIONAL MAN WOULD HAVE CRACKED ...BUT STILL HE HELD ON.

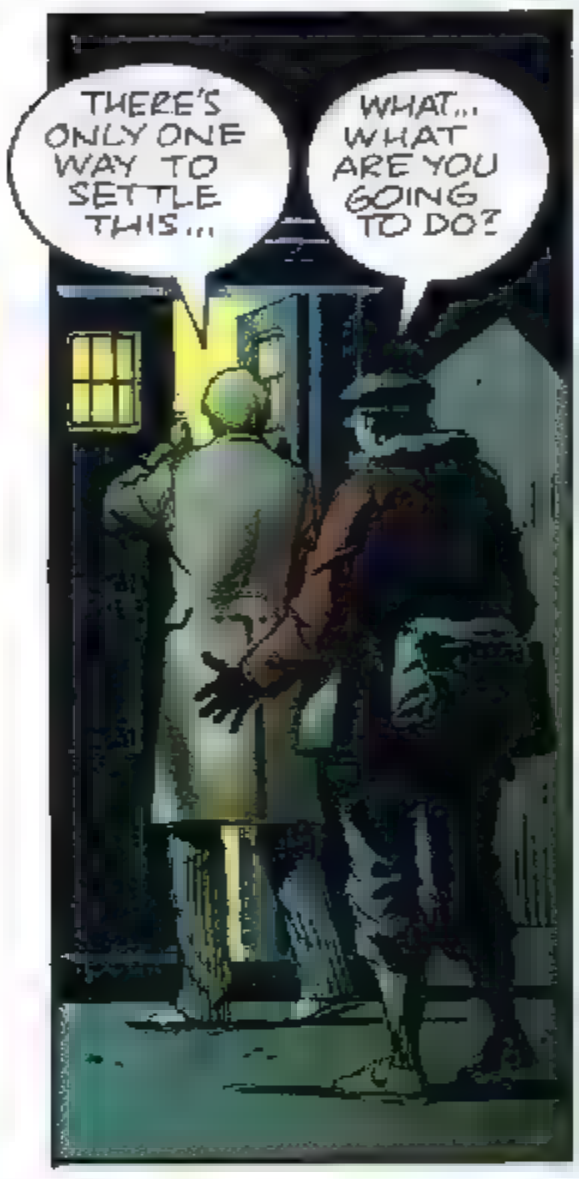

SO WHEN AN APPARITION LOOMED BEFORE HIM, IT HELD NO MORE FEAR...
HE SIMPLY VIEWED IT WITH THE DETACHMENT THAT GREAT TERROR BRINGS...
VIORP

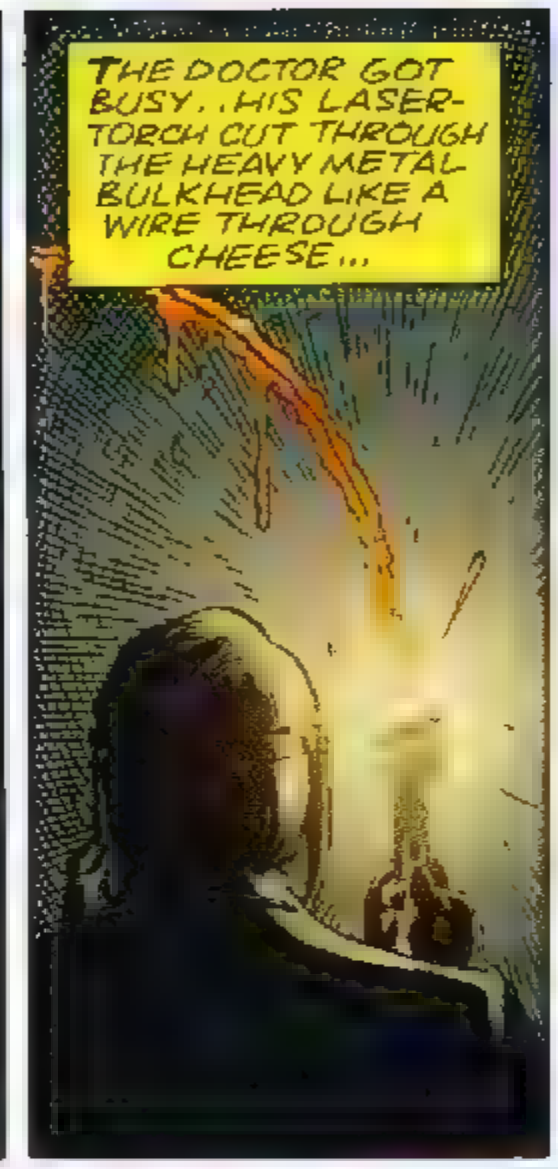
MAX! CAN YOU HEAR ME? ARE YOU ALRIGHT? I HEARD YOU CALLING!
IT WASN'T ME...NOT ME...IT WAS THE THING THE THING IN THE DARK! I DIDN'T CALL OUT... IT WASN'T MY VOICE!
IT WASN'T MY VOICE!

THE RISING HYSTERIA IN MAX'S VOICE WAS CUT SHORT BY AN OPEN-HANDED SLAP ...JUST HARD ENOUGH TO SHOCK HIS MIND BACK TO AWARENESS
SLAP

YOU HIT ME! YOU HIT ME! AND I'M WEARING GLASSES AS WELL!
MAX, LISTEN TO ME... WE'RE ALONE ON THIS SHIP! THERE IS NO OTHER LIFE FORCE RECORDED ON MY SCANNER!

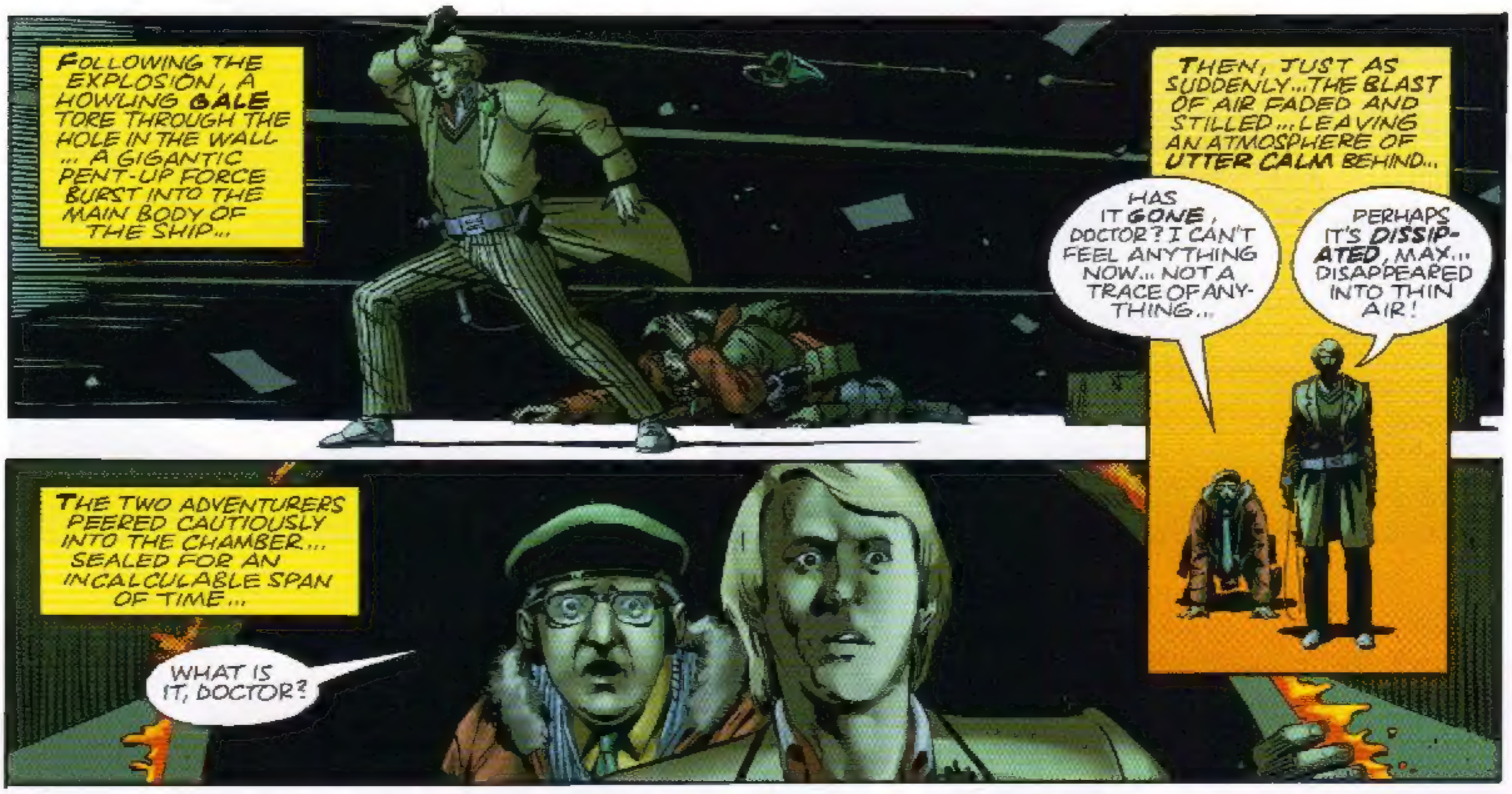
BUT THERE WAS A LIFE-FORCE RECORDED ON MY SCANNER, DOCTOR... LOOK!
IT'S A BROKEN STICK, MAX...





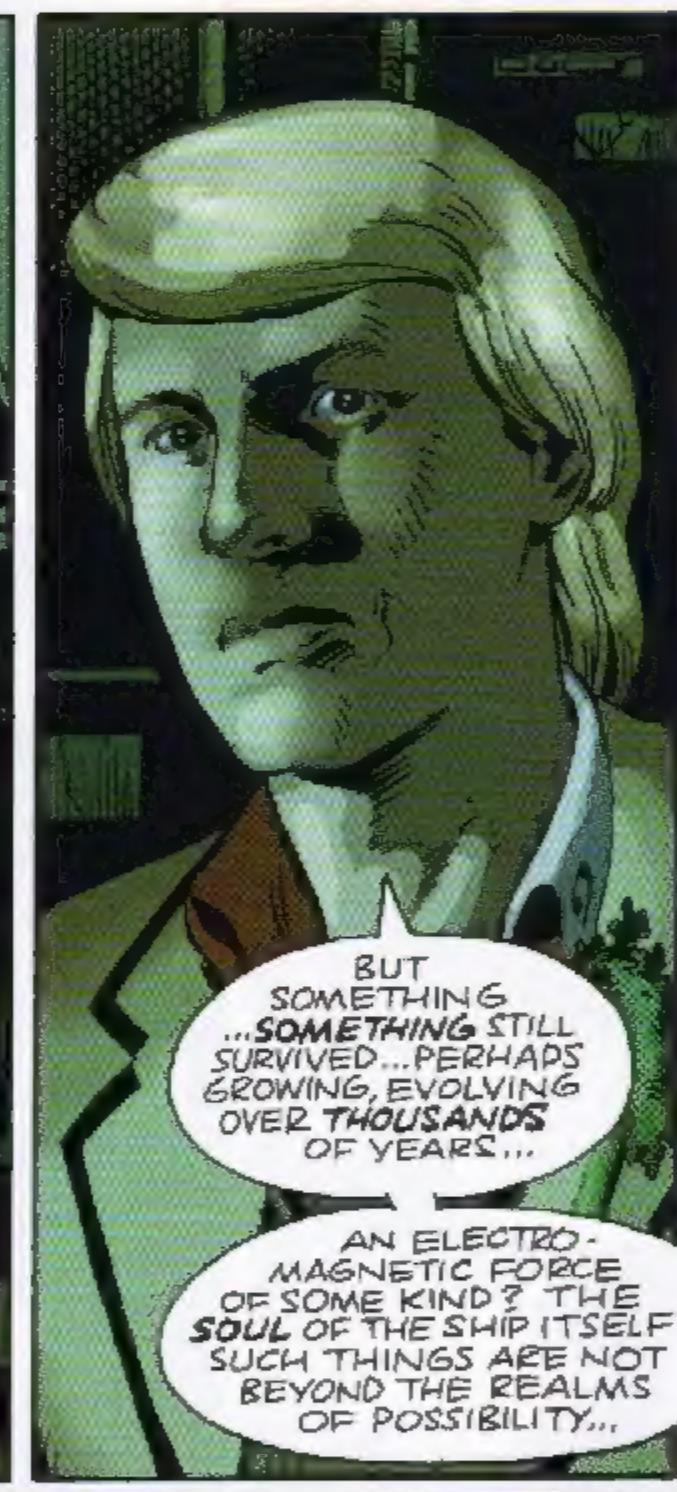
BUT THEN...BEFORE EITHER OF THEM COULD MOVE...

WHOOM!


FOLLOWING THE EXPLOSION, A HOWLING GALE TORE THROUGH THE HOLE IN THE WALL ... A GIGANTIC PENT-UP FORCE BURST INTO THE MAIN BODY OF THE SHIP...
THEN, JUST AS SUDDENLY...THE BLAST OF AIR FADED AND STILLED...LEAVING AN ATMOSPHERE OF UTTER CALM BEHIND...
HAS IT GONE, DOCTOR? I CAN'T FEEL ANYTHING NOW... NOT A TRACE OF ANYTHING...
PERHAPS IT'S DISSIPATED, MAX... DISAPPEARED INTO THIN AIR!
THE TWO ADVENTURERS PEERED CAUTIOUSLY INTO THE CHAMBER... SEALED FOR AN INCALCULABLE SPAN OF TIME...
WHAT IS IT, DOCTOR?

IT'S A CONTROL ROOM, MAX... WHAT MIGHT BE CALLED A 'COCKPIT' IN AN AIRCRAFT FROM EARTH...
BUT IT'S ALL COMPLETELY COMPUTER-BASED ...OR IT WAS!

IT'S ALL MORE OR LESS DISINTEGRATED NOW... THE SHIP'S ATMOSPHERE HAS SEEN TO THAT...
OBVIOUSLY, AN ENORMOUS LENGTH OF TIME HAS PASSED SINCE THIS WAS ALL DESIGNED AND BUILT...


BUT SOMETHING ...SOMETHING STILL SURVIVED...PERHAPS GROWING, EVOLVING OVER THOUSANDS OF YEARS...
AN ELECTRO-MAGNETIC FORCE OF SOME KIND? THE SOUL OF THE SHIP ITSELF? SUCH THINGS ARE NOT BEYOND THE REALMS OF POSSIBILITY...

AFTER ALL...THERE'S A COMPUTER ON RIGEL FOUR THAT WRITES VERY GOOD POETRY...
I KNOW WHAT I'D CALL IT, DOCTOR... I'D CALL IT A GHOST ...PLAIN AND SIMPLE!

THAT'S SOMETHING WE MAY NEVER KNOW FOR SURE, MAX...
ARE WE LEAVING?

HAVEN'T YOU NOTICED? THE ATMOSPHERE IS GETTING WARMER BY THE MINUTE...
THE SHIP IS HEATING UP!
MY GUESS IS IT'S ENCOUNTERING EARTH ATMOS-PHERE!

AND WITHOUT HEAT SHIELDS IT WILL BURN UP ON ENTRY FAIRLY QUICKLY...

I'D HATE TO BE AROUND WHEN THAT HAPPENS!

ON A DARK, MOON-LESS NIGHT IN THE WILDS OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE ... THE AREA KNOWN AS WELLS WOOD ONCE AGAIN BORE SILENT WITNESS TO THE ARRIVAL OF AN ALIEN VISITOR...

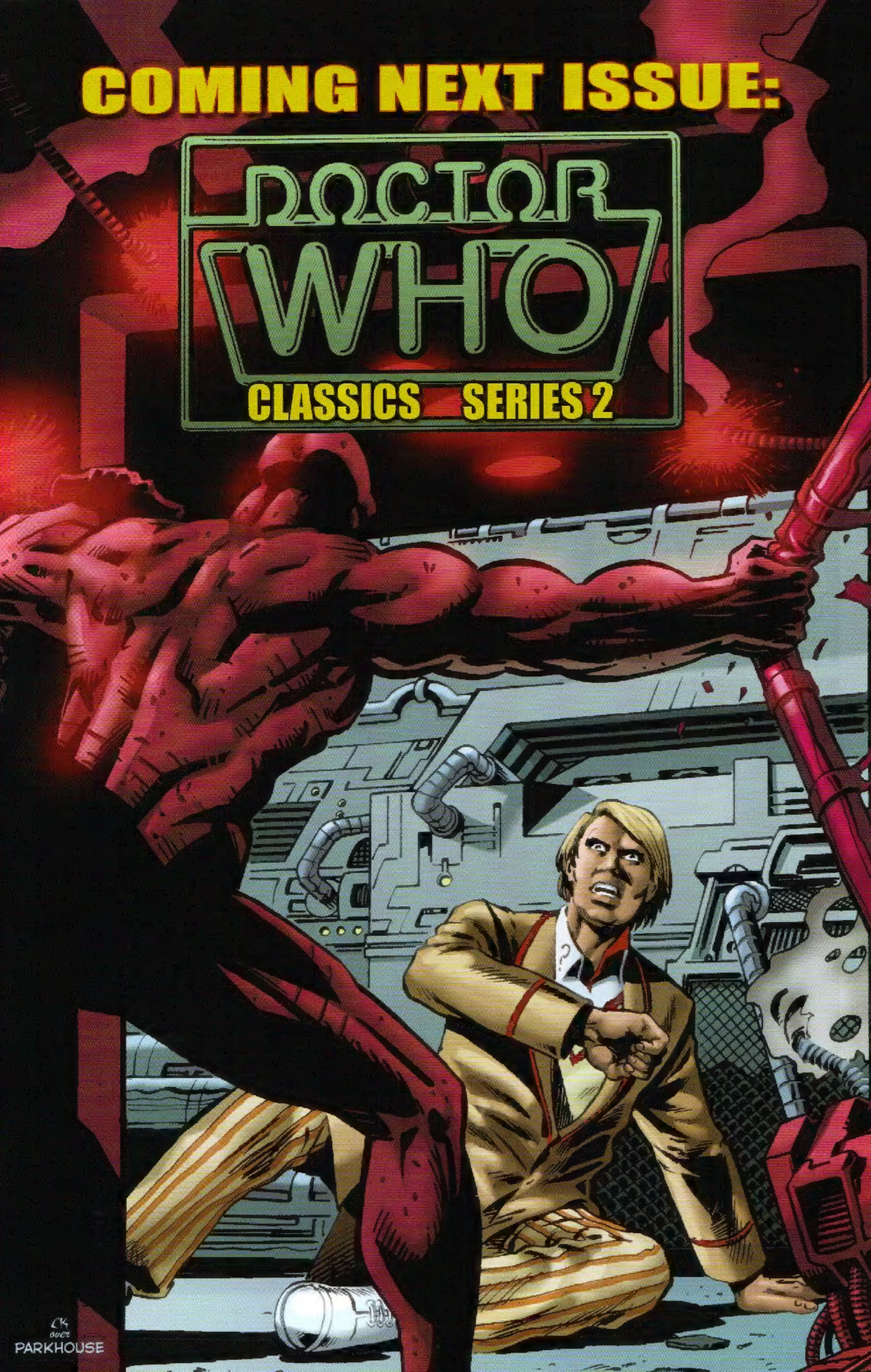
IS THIS GOODBYE, DOCTOR?
FOR A WHILE, MAX... THOUGH I DARESAY WE'LL BUMP INTO EACH OTHER BEFORE LONG...

ONE LAST QUESTION... EXACTLY WHEN WILL THAT STARSHIP BEGIN TO BREAK UP?
PRECISELY FIFTY SEVEN MINUTES FROM NOW... THE DEBRIS SHOULD SCATTER FAR AND WIDE ... IT'LL BE QUITE A DISPLAY!

THE NIGHT THAT MAX GAINED A LITTLE GRUDGING RESPECT IN THE VILLAGE...

THE NIGHT THAT STARS FELL ON STOCKBRIDGE...

DAVE GIBBONS

THE END.

COMING NEXT ISSUE: